

POLICE MAP OUT PATTERN IN SLAYINGS SUSPECT ALLEGEDLY REFINED TECHNIQUES

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Benjamin (Tony) **Atkins** , the admitted Woodward Corridor serial killer, refined his lethal methods and techniques as he allegedly killed more women, according to his confessions to police.

Investigators said **Atkins** ' confessions to 11 slayings, one rape and attempted murder show a pattern of targeting vulnerable victims and using different choke holds to render his victims unconscious in order to kill them.

Atkins also at times carried a condom, although it is unclear whether he was trying to avoid contracting a disease or lessen the chances of being identified by chemical analysis of body fluids, investigators said.

Authorities charged **Atkins** with first-degree murder Wednesday for the strangulation of Bertha Mason, whose body was found Jan. 25 in a vacant building on Alger just off Woodward Avenue in Detroit. He previously had been charged with three other murders, a rape and attempted murder.

Last week, **Atkins** confessed to 11 slayings along a 1.4-mile stretch of the Woodward Corridor in Detroit and Highland Park. The killings are thought to have begun in mid-December.

A 36-year-old woman said she was able to break free and fight off **Atkins** when he allegedly raped her then grabbed her in a choke hold.

Investigators said that is believed to have been his first attack and that his failure prompted him to seek easier targets and use surer methods.

The later victims were smaller and weaker, and were killed with different holds, investigators said.

Investigators, who spoke on condition of anonymity, declined to reveal the exact methods used.

However, they said **Atkins** varied his assaults in what could have been an attempt to find better means of subduing and controlling his victims.

Most of the victims were prostitutes or drug users who were weakened and debilitated by crack cocaine and street life.

Additionally, **Atkins** knew that he could knock out his victims by cutting off the blood supply to their brain, investigators said.

Investigators have said that **Atkins** , a former pizza cook from Highland Park, deliberately prolonged the actual killing, allowing some victims to revive from time to time before he killed them.

Robert Ressler, a retired FBI agent and pioneering researcher in serial killings, said such a technique is consistent with sexual sadism.

Ressler said sexual sadists often try to find techniques to heighten and draw out the act. Some have gone so far as to study cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) so they can keep victims alive as long as possible, he said.

Researchers have said that serial killers are trying to create situations that will satisfy unfulfilled sexual fantasies.

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